

families—are faced with the very real threat that they may be ripped away from the only lives and the only country they have ever known. These young people might be little more than numbers on a page to those who spend their days waging political fights in the Nation's Capital, but this is not just some academic topic for the thousands of young people across the land who would be affected by these vicious policies. This is a real-life issue with real-life consequences and real-life dangers for many of our friends and neighbors.

It is real for those like Cynthia Aguilar, whom I met this fall at the University of Oregon in Eugene. She spoke eloquently about how her mother sacrificed so much for her, living paycheck to paycheck so Cynthia could have an education and a better life.

It is real for those like Eastern Oregon University student Daysi Bedolla, who spoke just as movingly when we met in Portland, as well as in La Grande at a townhall I held in her community. Not only does Daysi talk about the huge contributions that Dreamers are making in their hometowns and college campuses, she demonstrates her contributions each day at Eastern Oregon University as the school's student body president.

Cynthia, Daysi, and so many others are what I call the real dream team, and I am proud to be their teammate in this fundamental fight for fairness. It is not a small fight. In Oregon alone, there are an estimated 11,000 Dreamers—enough to fill almost every seat in the Memorial Coliseum—and every one of those young people has parents and brothers and sisters and friends in their communities. They have well-laid plans to work hard in school, make something of their lives, and start families of their own in the United States. The strength of their stories fuels our fight, and that is why I join colleagues today in insisting that the Dream Act come to the floor of this Senate. This has been a long battle.

I am proud to have been with the Dreamers every step of the way from the Dream Act legislation to President Obama's actions on DACA. I am also pleased to have worked with my colleagues to introduce legislation like the Protect Dreamer Confidentiality Act. This bill would ensure that the information Dreamers provided to the government isn't somehow used against them for immigration enforcement.

Congress has to come together and work in a bipartisan way on a fair path forward for Dreamers. This effort from the White House to punish innocent young people and split families goes against the values we cherish as Americans and further divides our country. These children have known nothing but the United States as their home. They have done nothing wrong and everything right. They deserve an opportunity to stay here. Our government made a promise to Dreamers when we encouraged them to share their stories

publicly, submit to background checks, and pay taxes. It would be wrong to go back on that promise now.

I am pleased to be on this floor to say that we are just going to battle every step along the way until there is justice done for the Dreamers.

#### REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank Senator MORAN, who graciously gave me some time, and I want to briefly talk about one other subject.

I am the ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, and I am pleased to serve with my colleague from Louisiana who also serves on the committee and will be a conferee on the tax bill.

I would like to bring up a matter the President introduced yesterday. The President has long said that there was going to be a "fantastic tax bill"—his words, not mine—and obviously the American people don't see it that way. Overwhelmingly, we see in surveys—I saw it in townhall meetings over the weekend, in a community Hillary Clinton won, in a community where Donald Trump was extremely popular—that this tax bill was incredibly unpopular.

The President admitted yesterday that there was a "tiny little sliver" of Americans who, as he said, "just through circumstances maybe don't get the full benefit of the tax bill." I am not sure what tax plan he is talking about, but it sure can't be the one that hikes taxes on middle-class folks that Republicans are working out in the conference right now.

So I want to get to the numbers, just briefly, from the independent, non-partisan referees at the Joint Committee on Taxation. These are the folks we pay. The numbers they have given us really aren't in line with what the President is talking about when he says only a "tiny little sliver" of Americans are going to be hurt and come out behind.

Thirteen million low- and middle-income Americans are facing an immediate tax hike of \$100 or more because of this bill. Apparently, in the President's view, 13 million Americans is a "tiny little sliver."

That is just the immediate impact. The bill gets worse and worse for middle-class folks with each passing year, and 2027 is when the numbers put your jaw on the floor. Under this plan that the President says is so "fantastic," 150 million middle-class taxpayers either get a couple of crumbs or they get hit with an outright tax hike. I am going to say that once more. One hundred and fifty million Americans will get nothing but crumbs or an outright tax hike. That is what the President calls a "tiny little sliver"? It is pretty close to 90 percent of the middle class.

That is just the raw math of who is facing a tax hike. As I have said, this bill drives a dagger into the heart of the Affordable Care Act. Thirteen million Americans are going to lose their

healthcare, and tens of millions more will get hit with a hidden tax hike in the form of higher insurance premiums. Then, of course, we all understand that the coverage requirement in the Affordable Care Act that Senate Republicans seek to remove is what makes it possible for us to get loophole-free, airtight protection for those who faced discrimination when they had a preexisting condition.

This is pretty troubling stuff, and it sure doesn't strike me that when this administration says that only a "tiny little sliver" of people are going to get hurt—the reality shows something very different.

The fact is, after all the giveaways to the multinational corporations and the well-connected and high-fliers, this bill is going to cost more than \$1 trillion. It is a real head-scratcher, how you can spend so much money, help so few people, and convince yourself that what you are doing is so terrific.

Peddling the idea that there is just a "tiny little sliver" of people out there who don't benefit from this tax plan, in my view, is preposterous, and the tens of millions of Americans this bill is going to hurt deserve far better.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE AND ACCESS ACT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I am glad to see the Presiding Officer in the Chair because I came to talk about a topic that he and I share a great concern and compassion about—the veterans of our States and our Nation.

I first want to thank Senator JOHN MCCAIN, of Arizona. Many of my colleagues have spent a much longer time in the Senate than I have, and they have had the opportunity to work side by side with Senator MCCAIN more often than I have, but I am honored today to join him in legislation that we introduced earlier this week. It is S. 2184, the Veterans Community Care and Access Act of 2017.

I am honored to have the opportunity to work side by side with Senator MCCAIN and other colleagues as we try to determine how best we can care for those who served our Nation. I wish to use this opportunity to pay tribute to the Senator from Arizona for his service to our Nation and what I know of his experience in Vietnam and his service to the Nation but what I also know

of him in difficult circumstances in which he continues to work for the benefit and well-being of the people of our country. We both share—he is a veteran, not I—the ideals and beliefs that those who served our country deserve only the best from a grateful nation.

I have been a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee since I came to Congress with that goal in mind, and I continue to serve in the Senate as a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I serve now as the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee that funds the Department of Veterans Affairs. We have introduced the Veterans Community Care and Access Act because we want to call on the VA to do what it is they say they want to do. This bill fulfills priorities.

The reason this bill comes to the Senate floor at this point in time is that the Veterans Choice Program was created at a time of crisis at the VA in which veterans were not being served and not being well served, and Congress responded with a program to allow veterans to access care in their communities. It is before us again because that program expires presumably this month, perhaps early in January. The bill expires when the funding for the Veterans Choice Program is used up, and that is a matter of days or weeks away. The effort, in part, is to reauthorize the Veterans Choice Program but, more importantly, to make certain that we revitalize, update, improve, alter, and transform the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In my view, it would be a sad circumstance in which we reach the conclusion that we must simply reauthorize the Choice Program without using this opportunity to transform the VA into something better that can serve the needs of more veterans in a better way to fulfill the needs of those veterans.

The legislation that Senator McCAIN and I have introduced does several things with regard to transforming the VA. It merges and modernizes the community care programs into one program. It provides greater access to care for veterans within the VA and within the community. In my view, this is not just about improving access or the quality of care in the community. It is about improving the opportunity of the VA to care for veterans within the VA. It establishes a framework for the VA to build a high-performing healthcare network. That network is designed to care for veterans where they can best receive the care, where they can receive the best quality care, and where they can geographically attain the care they need.

In addition to that, it requires the VA to coordinate that care within that network across the system so that once a veteran is a patient of the VA, they are not forgotten, they are followed, and they, as an individual veteran, have a care coordinator within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Regarding reform legislation on this VA community care, Secretary Shulkin, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, told me: "We need more specificity." So we developed legislation that balances instruction and guidance from Congress with the VA's own proposal. Secretary Shulkin also told me that if too much is left to the regulation process, "the VA will keep things the way they are now"—that things will not change. This is a recognition of the bureaucracy that he manages, and it is a recognition of that bureaucracy's refusal to change.

Refusal to change, unfortunately, is what got us to the 2014 scandal—exhibited, particularly, in Phoenix—which revealed nationwide system failures and resulted in the deaths of veterans. It is also evidenced by refusal to change, which is shown the number of times we have had a crisis in which the VA has run out of money to pay for the Choice Program and again comes to us at the 11th hour telling us they need help financially to keep the Choice Program going. It is a reason why today we can't tell you how much money is needed or when the current resources will expire.

I don't want us to miss the opportunity to do something more than simply reauthorize the Choice Program. I want to use this opportunity to create a system that not only works for veterans but modernizes and transforms the VA into a 21st century healthcare system that will serve our veterans today and veterans for generations to come.

This legislation reforms the VA healthcare system by connecting independent demand and capacity assessments to objective access and quality standards, which are used, then, to provide the veterans access to care in their community. The point here is that the VA remains the gatekeeper. The point, also, is that the criteria—the broad outline by which community care should be and must be provided—is determined by Congress, not by rules and regulations from within the bureaucracy of the Department. This legislation creates the tools the VA must use to reform healthcare, safeguards our veterans from inconsistent experiences, and leads to poor health outcomes.

This effort was a collaboration, including a strong collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs, but also with the General Accounting Office, the Congressional Research Service, the Department of Defense, RAND, various healthcare industry experts across the country, as well as veterans services organizations.

We worked closely with the entities that have investigated the VA. In the Appropriations subcommittee that I chair, we often have the IG or the GAO in front of us explaining one more time a flaw that occurred at the VA and what needs to be done to correct that flaw. We sought their input into how

not to fix the consequences of a flaw but how to avoid a flaw. We want to fill in the gaps and develop solutions in advance of problems, and that requires real transformation within the VA.

We need to get the VA's house in order so they can do what they want to do, what they are required to do, and what the Americans demand of them—care for our veterans. There is too much dysfunction still happening at the VA for Congress not to take a stronger and more measured approach to reforming the VA healthcare system. It is unacceptable, in my view, for us to rely on "criteria the Secretary will develop" because that translates into a VA bureaucracy determining veteran eligibility in that regulatory process.

In large part, this legislation is derived, in my view from my experience as a Member of the Senate, in which not a day goes by that our office doesn't hear from veterans across Kansas and across the country. They bring to us the problems they have experienced, what all of us in the Senate would call casework. Somebody brings us a problem, and we work to solve it. The goal and my belief is that the outcome of this legislation reduces the amount of casework, which isn't about reducing our workload. It is about making certain that veterans don't have to come to their Congressman or Congresswoman and don't have to come to their U.S. Senator to get the services they are entitled to by law and by moral obligation. We don't learn from history. We need transformation. We need something more than just saying: Let's keep the current process in place for a while longer.

Following World War II, GEN Omar Bradley was assigned the task of overhauling the VA for the millions of Americans who were returning home from World War II. He said some important things at that point in time. Bradley rightfully kept the needs of veterans at the forefront. He said: "We are dealing with veterans, not procedures; with their problems, not ours."

The goal and the outcome of good legislation will be to reduce and, hopefully, over time, to eliminate most of the problems our veterans experience in dealing with the VA and in accessing the healthcare they have been promised.

The VA has done an admirable job in many, many instances, but way too many veterans fall through the cracks. I would estimate that our office receives 30 new cases every week, and most of them deal with the issue of healthcare, and many of those deal with the issue of community care.

We can reform this system. We can make it better for the veteran. We can make it better for the provider and for those hospitals and clinics across Kansas and around the country that are willing to serve the VA if there is a process in place by which they get paid and they get paid at a rate with which they can afford to care for those veterans. What I would say is that, in

most instances, it is so they don't lose more money in caring for those veterans.

Just like at the conclusion of World War II, when General Bradley overhauled the VA, today's VA is in need of another major reform. Just as General Bradley did, we must keep the veterans' unique wants and needs in mind as we reshape and reform the delivery of healthcare. Veterans require and deserve the best our Nation has to offer. If the VA is serious about restoring the trust with veterans, then, the VA needs to be committed to creating a modern, functional healthcare system that increases access—both within the VA and within the community—for timely and quality care. We ought not miss this opportunity. We ought not shy away from legislation that helps to achieve that outcome.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### DACA

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to spend a couple of minutes talking about the Dream Act and the so-called DACA issue. There are so many acronyms here in Washington. Sometimes we rely too much on them, but in this case, a lot of Americans know what we are talking about—the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

This policy was put in place in the prior administration. Then in September, in this administration, the President made an announcement to end the program, to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program. The President imposed, I would argue, an arbitrary deadline of March 5 of next year, which is looming now. Something on the order of 20,000 DACA recipients have already lost their protection from detention and deportation, and I believe that it is critical for Congress to act now to pass the bipartisan Dream Act.

What are we talking about here?

We are talking about young people who arrived in this country, in many cases, at very, very young ages—some of them babies, some of them young children at the time. When you hear their stories, you come away impressed that they have succeeded, that they have become part of the fabric of American life.

In a meeting a couple of months ago—sitting in a conference room, around a long conference table with other DACA recipients, because of the looming deadline and the potential that she could lose the status she has now and be deported—one DACA recipient said to me: The only country I have ever known doesn't want me—or at

least she was reflecting that the policy the administration had enunciated seemed to send a message to her that she was not wanted.

This makes no sense at all on a number of fronts, and I will get to each of them in a moment, but I will start with the word "promise." These young people were made a promise by our government. It was made by the President of the United States of America when he said: Come forward, and we will protect you because you have taken that affirmative step forward.

That promise cannot be violated, in my judgment, by any President or, certainly, by inaction on the part of Congress. If this government is willing to break that promise to what most believe is something on the order of 800,000 young people who have lived in the United States since their childhoods and after our having allowed them to better contribute to their families and their communities, why would any government around the world, let alone our own people, believe any other promise that we would make?

Would we have that moment, I would hope that we would be confident that a foreign government that happens to be an ally would be able to take our word for something—take the word of the President, take the word of a Federal official or a Member of Congress—when we make an assertion.

We all remember the story in the context of the Cuban missile crisis, when an American official went to see President de Gaulle of France—an ally, a close ally, an ally for generations. In discussion with President de Gaulle of France, that envoy said: The President of the United States wants me to present evidence to you to prove that there are missiles in Cuba.

As we were told, President de Gaulle said: There is no reason for you to show the surveillance pictures. If the President of the United States says there are missiles in Cuba, I believe him, and you don't need to prove it to me.

Part of that was because, over the generations, leaders of our country had built up a kind of credibility, a believability, that was very important to our international relationships—in this case, having to do with the French people.

Yet our government would break a promise to 800,000 young people—law-abiding young people, young people who have succeeded, in many of whom our country has invested by way of their educations. They have been educated in our school districts—educated in grade school and in high school and in our institutions of higher education in some instances. We are going to break a promise to them? Why would anyone trust us around the world if we would break a promise to 800,000 young people?

This is the responsibility not only of the administration but of both parties in both Houses because, if that promise is violated by inaction or action, then I think that we damage our credibility

here at home, especially, but also around the world.

We know that there are economic consequences to this action or inaction. By one estimate, when I consider just Pennsylvania, here are some of the numbers. In Pennsylvania, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program has allowed nearly 5,900 young people to come forward and to pass background checks to live and to work legally in this country. That was the promise. You come forward, and you allow a background check to proceed. You pass it, and you work legally in this country.

What kind of impact would play out in Pennsylvania if those 5,900 young people were to be lost because DACA would have ended?

The cost for our State would be, by one estimate, \$357 million. The national number is extraordinarily high. For the 800,000 young people who have lived in the United States since their childhoods, if DACA ends, the national economy will lose more than \$460 billion—that is billion with a "b" as opposed to the Pennsylvania number, which is in the millions—over the decade. So it would be, roughly, \$46 billion or so every year for 10 years. Why would we do that? Why would anyone want that to happen—to have that kind of economic hit to the national economy?

I think it is wrong just based upon its being a violation of a promise. It is a sacred obligation of any government, especially to the people who are living within the boundaries of the United States of America. That is offensive enough for me to speak out against action or inaction that would be against the interests of these young people. Even if you did not prioritize the violation of a sacred promise, you could also arrive at the conclusion that ending DACA would be a mistake for purely economic reasons if you were concerned about the national economy.

These young people, known as Dreamers, as I said, have lived in this country since they were very young. They are law-abiding residents. They have learned English. They pay taxes and have gone to school. They have secured jobs to support themselves and their families. For many of these Dreamers, America is, indeed, the only home they have ever known. Here are a couple of examples, in this case, from Pennsylvania.

Audrey Lopez, a Dreamer from Lancaster, PA, was brought to the United States from Peru when she was just 11 years old. Audrey spent most of her childhood in Pennsylvania, and her parents instilled in her the value of hard work and an education. Like so many Dreamers, Audrey Lopez only learned that she was undocumented when she started applying to college and learned that she did not have a Social Security number.

Despite her not having access to financial aid, Audrey worked hard and graduated from Millersville University